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National Park Service News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – December 1, 2004

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Sue Fischer Receives 2004 National Freeman Tilden Award for New Exhibits at Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument Visitor Center

WASHINGTON, D.C.– National Park Service (NPS) Director Fran Mainella recently announced Exhibit Specialist Sue Fischer from Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument, Flagstaff, Arizona, as the recipient of the 2004 Freeman Tilden Award for her creativity in planning, developing, and installing new interpretive exhibits for the Monument's visitor center. NPS Chief of Interpretation Corky Mayo presented Ms. Fischer the award at the National Association for Interpretation Workshop in Grand Rapids on November 18.



"I had the pleasure of seeing the end result of Sue's hard work first hand on a recent trip to the park," said Mainella. "The exhibits were both attractive and engaging, and clearly offered something for everyone. The story of Sunset Crater Volcano was presented in a compelling way, which made it very interesting."

Sue Fischer was presented the national award for leading the effort to replace the visitor center exhibits. She assumed full responsibility for the project and remained intimately involved in every detail from concept to installation. She removed the old exhibits and replaced them with new engaging exhibits representing the multiple points of view of the scientific and American Indian communities. The exhibits were designed to offer something for every educational level, learning style, and cultural background.

An additional effort was made to tie the story of Sunset Crater Volcano to the other Flagstaff Monuments. Ms. Fischer's efforts included the creation of a partnership with the Museum of Northern Arizona for design and fabrication and an extensive involvement of the scientific/research community and affiliated tribes to balance scientific and cultural stories. Interactive demonstrations included state-of-the-art seismic monitoring equipment, visitor-operated computer links, and contemporary American Indian art. Sue's vision was the one constant throughout the project. Big stories were melted to their essence. The process was without ego, thanks to Sue Fischer's example. Her knowledge, planning abilities, and human relations skills resulted in new exhibits that are unique, inclusive, and compelling. They will serve to inspire visitors for years to come.

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When reflecting on the project, Sue Fischer remarked, "Working with so many partners, melding their insights into an award winning product, makes this the highlight of my career. Great projects don't come along every day, and are made even better by a great team."

The award is named for Freeman Tilden the author of "The National Parks, What They Mean to You and Me," and "Interpreting Our Heritage." Mr. Tilden's writings have had considerable influence on national park interpretation and education programs. The Award, sponsored in partnership with the NPS and the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), is an annual award recognizing outstanding contributions to the public through interpretation by an NPS employee. Nominees for this award are judged upon their creativity, originality, and positive contributions to enhancing the public's understanding of the NPS and the resources it protects.

It is intended to recognize an individual who has successfully developed, revitalized, or delivered a specific interpretive or educational program, activity, or event in a particularly effective and creative fashion during a specific time.

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